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**'O, Son of the Conqueror':
A note on *jinaputra* as a term of address in the *Buddhāvatamsaka*
and in Mahāyāna sūtras**

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The term of address *bho jinaputra(ā)/bhavanto jinaputrā*, in Tibetan *kye rgyal ba'i sras/bu*, seems to be characteristic of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* family of texts and a few other Mahāyāna sūtras.

The entry for *bhos* in Monier Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* records *bho* before vowels and soft consonants, or *bhos* and *bhoh* before hard consonants, and describes it as an interjection or vocative particle commonly used in addressing another person or several persons.¹ The *Pali-English Dictionary* defines *bho* as a familiar term of address (in speaking to equals or inferiors),² Geiger's *Pāli Grammar* as 'the form of address *bhavant* "venerable" used for the pron. of the second person'.³

Jinaputra (Pali *jinaputta*), son of the conqueror, may in general be used for both arhats and bodhisatvas.⁴ Synonyms include *jinātmaja*, *jinorasa/jinaurasa*, *jinasuta*, *jinendraputra*, and of course other combinations like *buddhaputra*, *sugatātmaja*. Our interest here is not the term itself, but the fact that its use as an interjection or term of direct address preceded by *bho/bhavanta* seems to be restricted to the *Buddhāvatamsaka* family of texts. It is used both in the singular, that is, in one-to-one conversations, and in the plural.

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¹ Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages*, New edition, Delhi: Motilal BanarsiDass, 1976(reprinted), p. 768.

² T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (eds.), *Pali-English Dictionary*, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1995 (reprinted), p. 509.

³ Wilhelm Geiger, *A Pāli Grammar*, tr. Batakrishna Ghosh, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1994, p. 92, § 98.3.

⁴ We choose to follow the mainstream Buddhist Sanskrit usage of manuscripts and inscriptions by spelling 'bodhisatva' with a single rather than a double 't'. See Gouriswar Bhattacharya, "How to Justify the Spelling of the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Term Bodhisatva?", in: Eli Franco and Monika Zin (eds.), *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*, Rupandehi: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010, Vol. II, pp. 35–50. This is also the preferred spelling in Khotanese, in Tibetan lexicography, and in old Thai documents.

Interestingly, the term of address is used throughout the *Daśabhūmika* chapter of the *Mahāvastu*.⁵ Here it is a term with which *arhats* address each other: for example, by Mahāmaudgalyāyana to address Mahākāśyapa (Senart I 74.21), by Mahākātyāyana to address Kāśyapa (I 77.13), and by Ānanda to address Kātyāyana (I 77.16). The chapter is set in an account of the first council in the Saptaparṇa cave at Rājagṛha. The main text on the ten bodhisatva stages (I 76–193), in prose and verse, is cast in the form of a dialogue between two great disciples, Mahākāśyapa and Mahākātyāyana, who address each other as *bho jinaputra* throughout. The former takes it for granted that Mahākātyāyana is expert in the bodhisatva practice (*buddhacarita*) and stages, and the latter does not disappoint him. The term of address, and indeed other forms meaning ‘son of the Conqueror’, do not occur elsewhere in the *Mahāvastu*, but only in the *Daśabhūmika* chapter.⁶

In the Chinese translations, the term of address *bho jinaputra(ā)/bhavanto jinaputra* is generally translated as *fo zi* 佛子 (*jinaputra*), sometimes translated as *zui sheng zi* 最勝子, with *zhu* 諸 added before these phrases when plural is required, and omitting *bho/bhavanta*, which is sporadically translated as *wei* 唯(惟). The results of a cursory CBETA search for the term *fo zi* 佛子⁷ revealed that it occurs much more frequently in the *Buddhāvatamsaka* than in other Mahāyāna sūtras: eleven times in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Xuanzang version), thirty-four times in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* (Kumārajīva version), sixty-seven times in the *Ratnakūṭa* collection, and 1,726 times in the *Buddhāvatamsaka* (Śikṣānanda version). Furthermore, we found that *wei fo zi* 唯(惟)佛子, *wei zhu fo zi* 唯諸佛子, *wei ting fo zi* 唯聽佛子 or *wei yuan fo zi* 唯願佛子 only occur in the *Daśabhūmika*: two times in the Śikṣānanda version, four times in the Dharmarakṣa version, and sixty-eight times (!) in the Khotanese monk Śīladharma’s version.⁸ A search for the term *wei zui sheng zi* 唯最勝子 revealed that it occurs only once in the *Fo shuo rulai xing xian jing* 佛說如來興顯經 (Dharmarakṣa version), which is an independent translation of the *Tathāgatotpatisambhavanirdeśa*. Because Chinese translations normally do not explicitly distinguish between the term of address *bho jinaputra(ā)/bhavanto jinaputra* and *jinaputra/jinaputra* in general, and because *zi* 子, ‘son’, can also translate *suta* or other Sanskrit forms, we restrict our primary research to the Tibetan and Sanskrit versions.

In the *Buddhāvatamsaka* family of texts, the term is used, frequently, throughout: for example in *Vajradhvajaparināma*, *Daśabhūmika*, *Ratnolkā*, *Tathāgatotpatisambhava*, *Lokottaraparivarta*, and *Anantabuddhakṣetraguṇodbhāvana*.⁹ The term is well-attested in

⁵ Émile Senart (ed.), *Le Mahāvastu*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 3 volumes, 1882–1897.

⁶ For this research we have benefitted from Emmanuel Fauré, Boris Ogubénine, Moriichi Yamazaki, and Yumi Ousaka, *Mahāvastu-Avadāna: Word Index and Reverse Word Index*, Tokyo: Chuo Academic Research Institute, 2009 (*Philologica Asiatica: Monograph Series* 25).

⁷ The CBETA version we used is April, 2011.

⁸ For Śīladharma, see Saerji, “The Translations of the Khotanese Monk Śīladharma preserved in the Tibetan *bka' 'gyur*”, in: *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2010*, Vol. XIV, 2011, pp. 185–222.

⁹ For the components of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* as reflected in Indian documents from about the fourth to the ninth centuries, see Skilling and Saerji, “The Circulation of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* in India” (forthcoming).

Sanskrit versions when they are available. In the *Gandavyūha*, the term occurs only twice – the *Gandavyūha*, is, after all, very different in that dialogues take place individually between Sudhana-kumāra and the 53 *kalyāṇamitras*, requiring different modes of address. The *Bhadracāri* is in verse, and is again a different type of text.

Bho jinaputra(ā)/bhavanto jinaputrā is apparently not used at all as a term of address in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Śhes phyin*) or the *Mahāratnakūta* (*Dkon mchog brtsegs pa chen po*) sections of the Kanjur.¹⁰ It is rare in the *Sūtra* (*Mdo, Mdo sde*) section. There the term of address occurs in three sūtras which are in fact independent translations of sections of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* – D 104, 187, 268 – and in two others which are associated with the *Buddhāvatamsaka*, the *Tathāgataguṇajñānacintyaviśayāvatāranirdeśa* (D 185) and the *Śraddhābalādhānāvatāramudrā* (D 201). These may be counted as ‘associated *Buddhāvatamsaka* references’.

Apart from these, the term of address occur sporadically as follows:

- three times in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* (D 106);¹¹
- two times in the *Ghanavyūha* (D 110);¹²
- six times in the *Buddhabalavardhanaprātihāryavikurvāñanirdeśa* (D 186);¹³
- once in the *'Phags pa sprin chen po'i mdo las phyogs bcu'i byang chub sems dpa' rgya mtsho 'dus pa'i dga' ston chen po la rtse ba zhes bya ba'i le'u* (D 233);¹⁴
- six times in a short text entitled *Theg pa chen po'i mdo chos rgya mtsho* (D 255).¹⁵
- once in another short text, *Dge ba dang mi dge ba'i las kyi rnam par smin pa bstan pa'i mdo* (D 355).¹⁶

Turning to the anthologies, we find that in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* the term occurs three times, among them:

- two times in the *Lokottaraparivarta*;¹⁷
- once in the *Ratnolkā*.¹⁸

These are both sections of the *Buddhāvatamsaka*.

¹⁰ Our research is based on searches for *kye rgyal* and other combinations in a preliminary electronic version of the Kanjur prepared by Ulrich Pagel.

¹¹ *Mdo sde, ca, 3a4; 3a6; 3b6*; cf. Lamotte, Chapitre I, 1, 2, 4.

¹² *Mdo sde, cha, 5a7; 5b1*.

¹³ *Mdo sde, tsa: kye rgyal ba'i bu dag*, 146b2; 147a1; 147a6; 147b6; *kye rgyal ba'i sras dag*, 147a2–3, *kye rgyal ba'i sras*: 151a6. For Sanskrit equivalents, cf. Gregory Schopen, “The Five Leaves of the *Buddhabaladhāna-prātihāryavikurvāñanirdeśa-sūtra* found at Gilgit”, in: *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 5, 1978, pp. 319–336.

¹⁴ *Mdo sde, wa*, 237a2: the Buddha preaches to Bodhisatva Samantabhadra, addressing him as *kye rgyal ba'i sras*.

¹⁵ *Mdo sde, tsa, 71a3–74a3; 72a2, 3, 7; 73a3–4; 73a4, 5*.

¹⁶ *Mdo sde, ah*, 209a1–216a4; 214b7.

¹⁷ 85b4; 86a7; 86b4; for Sanskrit see Cecil Bendall (ed.), *Çikṣāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Teaching compiled by Çāntideva chiefly from earlier Mahāyāna-sūtras*, St. Pétersbourg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1897–1902 (*Bibliotheca Buddhica* I) (repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Dass), p. 151.13, 17.

¹⁸ 86b4; for Sanskrit see Bendall, *Çikṣāsamuccaya*, p. 153.11.

In the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, the term occurs thirty-four times:

- twenty-six times in the *Tathāgatotpattisamṛtbhava*;¹⁹
- seven times in the *Daśabhūmika*.²⁰

These too are sections of the *Buddhāvatamsaka*.

The term occurs one time in a citation attributed to the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka*, but the passage does not occur anywhere in the extant Tibetan version.²¹

This brief study shows us that we have much to learn about the terms of address used in Mahāyāna sūtras. Here the use of *bho jinaputra(ā)/bhavanto jinaputrā* points to styles and modes of speech that were shared in a range of texts that belong to the bodhisatva world of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* and a few other Mahāyāna sūtras. What does this tell us? Can it suggest that these texts were formed and redacted in a single textual community, or in affiliated textual communities? The fact that the only non-Mahāyāna text to use the phrase is the section of the *Mahāvastu* that introduces the ten stages is remarkable. Can it be a hint at a Mahāsāṃghika connection? Perhaps, but only a hint – the evidence is too tenuous to lead to any conclusion, unless supporting evidence can be found. Can the use of *bho jinaputra* be a regional mannerism, or didactic style, of a group or lineage of *dharma bhānakas*? It does not seem possible to answer these questions until more research has been done on styles of address in the *Buddhāvatamsaka* and in Mahāyāna sūtra literature in general, and on the names of bodhisatvas, figures of speech and literary techniques, vocabulary and stylistics, and so on.

We offer this article as a small step towards a broader understanding of the vast world of the *Buddhāvatamsaka*.

¹⁹ 184b3; 185a1, 4, 5, 6; 185b2, 3, and so on; see Bhikkhu Pāsādika (ed.), *Nāgārjuna's Sūtrasamuccaya: A Critical Edition of the mDo kun las btus pa*, København: Akademisk forlag, 1989, pp. 113.7; 114.12, 24; 115.3, 7, 14, 23; 116.6, etc.

²⁰ 212a4, 5, 6, 7; 212b1, 2 (Bhikkhu Pāsādika, *Nāgārjuna's Sūtrasamuccaya*, pp. 199.4, 8–9, 15, 19–20; 200.1, 5, 7).

²¹ 149a2 (Pāsādika, p. 3.9). Cf. Ulrich Pagel, *The Bodhisattvapiṭaka: Its Doctrines, Practices and their Position in Mahāyāna Literature*, Tring: The Institute for Buddhist Studies (*Buddhica Britannica. Series Continua V*), 1995, pp. 21–24.